Remarks of U.S. Representative Judy Biggert (R-IL-13)
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
House Committee on Science
MARKUP of H.R. 5656,
The Energy Research, Development, Demonstration and Commercial Application Act
June 22, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this markup of H.R. 5656, the Energy Research Act.

Last year, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Energy Policy Act of 2005, or EPACT, the first comprehensive energy package enacted in well over a decade. Now, regardless of what my Science Committee colleagues might have thought of the bill in its entirety, I think it's safe to say that the bill's research and development provisions – crafted by this committee – were comprehensive and innovative and therefore enjoyed broad, bipartisan support in the Congress.

The bill's R&D provisions are one of the major reasons I supported EPACT. I believe they put the United States on a path toward a more secure energy future by diversifying our energy supplies, improving efficiency, and reducing consumption through research and the use of technology.

That bill was just the first step, and nobody should expect our nation's energy problems to disappear overnight. High natural gas prices and the recent spike in gasoline prices serve as a stark reminder that the path to energy independence is a long and arduous one. To make significant progress down this path requires a steadfast commitment from Congress and the federal government to support the development of advanced energy technologies and alternative fuels that will help end our addiction to oil and gasoline.

The bill we are considering today includes provisions that do just that, by building on the excellent R&D provisions this committee included in EPACT. As a matter of fact, some of the sections of this bill should be very familiar, as they were approved by this committee and the full House as part of EPACT, but were not included in the final conference report enacted last August. This is the case for Section 11, creating an advanced solar demonstration program, and Section 12, creating a grant program to encourage the design of energy efficient buildings.

The remaining provisions reflect the latest research, the emergence of innovative technologies, and new ways of thinking about our power problems.

Sections 1 through 9 represent the fundamental components of the Advanced Energy Initiative, which the President outlined during this year's State of the Union address. They include sections to advance the development of:

- Biofuels from cellulosic feedstocks, or feedstocks other than corn,
- Technologies for hydrogen storage onboard vehicles,
- New materials to enable the widespread use of solar power, and
- Technologies that minimize the cost and environmental impact and maximize the efficiency of harnessing the power of the wind.

This bill also addresses two other major components of the President's energy initiative, FutureGen and the advanced fuel cycle R&D that is critical to the President's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, or GNEP.

With respect to FutureGen, Section 3 of this bill codifies the emissions goals established by DOE for the project. It also directs the Secretary of Energy to use his judgment and discretion to strike the right balance between the use of experimental and readily available components in FutureGen. This will reduce the risk of the project and ensure that FutureGen can be a model for the coal-fired power plant of the future.

As for advanced fuel cycle R&D, Section 4 of this bill gives the Department some much-needed direction. As someone who supports the President's vision to revitalize the domestic nuclear power industry and recognizes the many potential benefits of the advanced fuel cycle, I also recognize that it is a complex system with complex technologies. As the DOE proceeds with its research, it must be certain that all the pieces of this complex system fit together and provide the benefits intended. The future of safe, efficient, and emissions free nuclear power depends on it. I believe it is only prudent to prohibit the DOE from constructing certain demonstration facilities until it has provided Congress the additional modeling, analysis, and planning necessary for us to make an informed decision about how best to proceed.

The rest of H.R. 5656 represents a compilation of a number of bipartisan bills introduced by members of the Science Committee. I, too, want to join the full committee chairman in commending our colleagues from Texas, Mr. Smith and Mr. McCaul, for their contributions to this bill.

Finally, Section 15 of the bill requires the National Academy of Sciences to clarify its October 2005 *Gathering Storm* report recommendation that a DARPA-like entity be created at the DOE. I hope the committee today will agree that we should not rush to create yet another, possibly duplicative bureaucracy within DOE before getting more details from the NAS about its recommendation.

With that, I again want to thank the Chairman for holding this mark-up today. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5656, and I yield back the balance of my time.